

expressed strong support for the vision articulated by President Bush on June 24, 2002, of an independent, sovereign and viable Palestinian state living in peace and security side by side with a secure Israel. Both Presidents agreed that all parties share a responsibility to bring about a just and comprehensive peace, and that ending violence must be the highest priority.

President Bush, accompanied by President Megawati, also met Islamic leaders KH Hasyim Muzadi, Dr. Syafi'i Ma'arif, and Dr. Azyumardi Azra, as well as Christian leader Rev. Dr. Natan Setiabudi and Hindu leader Ida Pedanda Gede Made Gunung. During that meeting, President Bush expressed great respect for Indonesia's religious tolerance, moderation, and commitment to democracy. The religious leaders briefed President Bush on the Indonesian Islam, as well as cultural and religious harmony in Indonesia. They also expressed their views on current events, such as the situation in the Middle East, Iraq, and Afghanistan. All agreed on the need to combat international terrorism.

The two Presidents recognized that a U.S.-Indonesia relationship based on mutual respect and equitable partnership is in the national interest of both countries. They pledged to deepen and strengthen this important relationship and to work together to promote global peace and prosperity.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Interview With the White House Press Pool

October 22, 2003

The President. What I thought I would do is just—

Q. On the record?

The President. Yes, on the record. I thought I would just give you some observations of this trip and then answer some questions. Just first observation is that we have worked hard to build up good bilateral relations in the Far East. And the—part of the purpose of the trip is to continue to foster those relations.

It struck me as interesting that the United States now has got good enough relations

with both—with countries like Japan and South Korea and China to effect policy which helps our mutual security and our economy—and economy. I think that's a very positive development.

The most notable example of where that is taking—where it is helping is in North Korea. When I visited with Hu Jintao, I spent a lot of time talking about North Korea, our mutual desire to effect change with Kim Chong-il. And it was a very positive discussion. But I also had the very same discussion with Koizumi and President Roh. I mentioned it to Vladimir. I didn't have a bilateral with Vladimir Putin, but I did talk to him about it in passing.

My point is, is that by working hard to establish good relations on a lot of fronts, when a common problem arises, we can effect the solution in a positive way. I know you asked me, Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters], about the North Korean reaction. I didn't exactly see what official said it. But I—what I hope my answer conveyed to you in public there was that this requires a degree of patience, because Kim Chong-il is used to being able to deal bilaterally with the United States. But the change of policy now is, is that he must deal with other nations, most notably China. And I was pleased with my discussions with Hu Jintao, about his—reaffirming his mutual desire—or his desire, which is our mutual goal, that Kim Chong-il disarm. He realizes that it's a problem.

We discussed the security guarantees, what form they may come in. I made it very clear, obviously—I said this during the pool spray there—that a treaty is not going to happen, but there are other ways to effect on paper what I have said publicly—we have no intention of invading. Obviously, any guarantee would be conditional on Kim Chong-il doing what he hopefully will say he'll do, which is to get rid of his nuclear weapons programs.

The APEC summit was positive. I mean, one of the things that's very important—the two things that came out of that, although evidently didn't get equal emphasis, but they were equally emphasized by all parties, was, one, the need to get the Doha Round of trade going again. This was really one of the first official meetings of a group of countries after

the Cancun talks broke down. And there was a positive statement coming out of the meeting, kind of universal agreement that Cancun was a missed opportunity. Hopefully the missed opportunity will be—will serve as a catalyst. I think people now have taken a step back and said, “Well, we did miss an opportunity,” and hopefully this will enable the talks—kind of not start at ground zero but have a running start as a result of the missed opportunity.

And it’s interesting, in the room there is something like 60 percent of all the world trade—was affected—was countries in that room, and therefore it was a, I think, a very positive and strong statement.

The other thing was the clear understanding of the countries of the need to fight terror. That’s important for the United States, that people continue to recognize that the war on terror goes on. I’ve always felt that there’s a tendency for people to kind of seek a comfort zone and hope that the war on terror is over. And I view it as a responsibility of the United States to remind people of our mutual obligations to deal with the terrorists.

That notion of responsible behavior by countries was finally accepted. This was not a—didn’t require a lot of push. People understood. President Megawati understands that when terrorists bomb Bali, it affects economies. It not only—there’s a serious economic consequence, same thing we felt on September the 11th, to our economy.

That was a very positive development. Bilateral discussion with all the leaders—in those bilateral discussions, we talked about this war on terror. Gloria Arroyo, with Abu Sayyaf, President Megawati just hours ago, we talked about the continued need for us to work together.

I think the other notable—when you step back and take a look at what our work with these Asian countries has been, they understand the Iraq issue well. South Korea was very forthcoming. Japan is forthcoming. Hu Jintao made it clear that he—that a peaceful Iraq was in the world interest. Those are all positive developments in kind of the aftermath of the military operation. And I think it speaks to our—the nature of our relationship with these countries right now.

Obviously we haven’t been to Australia, but Australia is a key component in a peaceful Asia-Pacific region and a key partner in the war on terror. So I’m looking forward to seeing John Howard. He and I have got a great relationship. He is a—as I said in Crawford, he’s a man of steel. He’s a standup guy.

Q. A sheriff?

The President. He’s a sheriff. See, that’s a good lesson. You should never answer the question you’re asked. [Laughter] Actually, I answered it for a reason. Of all the people in the world who understand Texas, it’s probably Australians.

Q. Patsy [Patricia Wilson, Reuters].

The President. Yes, Patsy. Anyway, it’s going to be a good visit down there. We had some good discussions there at APEC, but this will be a chance to further our discussions and assure the Australian people that the American people are really grateful for the support and mutual efforts to make the world secure.

I had a good visit with the religious leaders today. It was an important visit. There were three Muslims, a Christian, and a Hindu. A couple of observations from the meeting: One, there was kind of a sense that Americans believe that Muslims are terrorists. And one of the reasons I wanted to have this meeting was because I wanted to make it very clear that I didn’t feel that way and Americans don’t feel that way. And I made it—assured them that Americans know that these terrorists are hiding behind Islam in order to create fear and chaos and death.

Secondly, there was a—they did bring up the Middle East. I explained to them what our policy was, that in order for there to be a Palestinian state—and I reminded them I was the first President to have articulated that—that there needs to be a concerted effort to fight off the terrorists who are trying to prevent the establishment of a state. I didn’t really have time to go in further than that, about the whole Aqaba accords and the progress we were making, until the Prime Minister, who had avowed—who vowed to fight terror with us, was eased out.

Let’s see, what else did they discuss? Iraq, of course. I assured them that we would do

our job, and then the Iraqis will run themselves, and that our job means to provide enough security so that the Iraqi citizens are able to write a constitution and hold elections, at which point the United States and the coalition forces will move on. And I think they were pleased to hear it. I don't want to put words in their mouth, but I think that relieved them to know that we have confidence in the Iraqi people's abilities to be a peaceful, free society.

National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice. You listened.

The President. Well, they did a lot of talking.

National Security Adviser Rice. They had a lot to say.

The President. They had some prepared texts. There was a good exchange. I'm glad I did it. They were, I think, appreciative of the fact I took time to listen to them and dispel some notions and to—my own personal views about religion and the views of our country. I reminded them, we've got a lot of Muslims living in the United States, and they make an important contribution to our country, and they're welcome in the United States. And we're a pluralistic, free society; people can worship the way they want to worship. And it works well in America.

All in all, it's been a very positive experience.

Indonesia Meeting With Religious Leaders

Q. Was it confrontational at all?

The President. Not at all, polite.

Q. You said that there were some texts. Did they come out with the line about—what did they tell you? How direct were they? They said some things going into the meeting that the United States policy is tilted against Muslims. What did they—

The President. They said the United States policy is tilted toward Israel, and I said our policy is tilted toward peace and that—and then I went through the notion of a Palestinian state and the need for us to fight off terror in order for a state to develop.

There wasn't a lot of debate. There were five people there that felt—that all needed to say something. So I gave them all a time

to speak, and I listened and would occasionally interject some thoughts about what they had said. But they were direct. One fellow felt that the war on Iraq was—I guess the best way to put it was maybe just—I can't remember his exact words, but it was like we just decided to act. And I reminded him that the world had spoken before, that there was a—the United States had passed—I didn't get into all the resolutions, but I made it clear that a process had gone on way before I made the decision to use military force, that the world had spoken before about Saddam Hussein.

I also made the point very clearly that there was a lot of human suffering; a lot of Muslims suffered in Iraq. And I did bring up the mass graves and the torture rooms and the rape rooms and the death at the hands of Saddam Hussein. My point to them was, was that we ended a lot of suffering, prevented a lot of suffering.

Lieutenant General Boykin

Q. Is your job made tougher in convincing them that Americans don't have a war on—don't dislike Islam when you have General Boykin saying that Muslims all—

The President. Yes, that came up. Boykin came up. I said he didn't reflect my opinion. Look, it just doesn't reflect what the Government thinks. And I think they were pleased to hear that.

Indonesia Meeting With Religious Leaders

Q. Something in your answer to your Terry's question was interesting. You articulated the fact that you're the President—first President to advocate a Palestinian state. And obviously in trying to reassure Muslims—

The President. Not that good a question. Go ahead.

Q. —not only in America but around the world, potential terrorist hotbeds—to reassure people who are interested in this subject of that point. It's not something we have heard you saying a lot lately. Is there a reason—

The President. About a Palestinian state?

Q. Right, that you were the first President to advocate it.

The President. I say it quite a bit. I mean, I really do. First of all, in America, most people know that. In Indonesia, maybe they didn't pay attention to it. But anyway, I explained it. It was not a—I don't view that as—I wouldn't read anything into that, I had to say that in Indonesia, but not saying it in every press conference I give.

Q. Can I ask you about some of the leaders you've met with here?

The President. Well, anyway—

Q. I guess what I'm getting at is, it's a good thing to have out there, I guess. We don't hear it a lot.

The President. Yes, I don't know. There's a lot of things that there's misconceptions. Evidently it's a misconceptions that Americans believe that Muslims are terrorists. And there was a—that's probably one of the best things that came out of the meeting, for me, was to have heard that concern, and for me being able to assure people and remind them about the nature of our society, that—and that Islam's a peaceful religion. The basic tenets of Islam is peace and respect and tolerance. And that's what they wanted to make the point to me, that we are—that's the way we are.

Interesting, their elections came up. This is the first direct Presidential election. It's going to be interesting—an interesting exercise in democracy. And they wanted to talk about that. And as you know—maybe you don't know—our USAID money is helping with the elections. They were appreciative of that. The education money came up. They wanted to make sure that this wasn't America's education system. I said, "It's not. It's money available for the Indonesian Government to help basic education develop." So those were a couple of misconceptions that it was important for me to help alter.

Democratic Candidates and Foreign Policy

Q. Can I ask a question—I know that you say campaigning—there will be time enough for campaigning. In just months, Democrats, at least, will be fighting in some very highly contested—what do you say to those who are criticizing your policy? Where does the line end where they've got to be very careful to not undermine American foreign policy?

The President. I don't know. You know, I'm not paying that much attention to it. Maybe you are. I'm not. You know, one of these days, they'll have a candidate, and then it will all sort out, kind of come in focus. Primarily—I don't know what they're saying, so it's hard for me to answer that.

Q. Democrats who are criticizing your policy now, some of them fairly severely, about the war, does that hurt when you go to meet with these foreign leaders? Does that have any resonance?

The President. You know, I can't—I don't know, because they have never brought it up. Nobody has ever said, "Your foreign policy is being challenged in Democrat primaries, and therefore you're less credible." I mean, it really hasn't come up. I think most people who understand America know that the field will eventually be whittled down to one opponent, and then we'll campaign.

Decisionmaking and Leadership

Q. You seem, on these trips in particular, to bond with some of these leaders who have taken on very difficult problems at home, sort of stuck their neck out, whether it's President Arroyo or—you had some of those comments about the King of Jordan when he came. And I was just wondering, do you relate to that at all, particularly in having to take on the war on terrorism and kind of not, as you say, wanting to be too comfortable and pretend that it's over?

The President. You know, that's an interesting question. First of all, I like people. And I spend time trying to—I think about the other person and how the other person might think and relate to the other person's problems. I do have good relations with these leaders on an individual basis, for a variety of reasons. I mean, Gloria Arroyo, who is taking a tough stand against Abu Sayyaf, there is a common bond there because she has made some tough decisions. But these leaders—for example, Aznar of Spain or Blair of Britain, these guys stood up, stood strong and were—did what they thought was right. That's my approach.

I remember when we had the discussion down in Crawford, one of reporters, fellow reporters, said, "I hear you don't pay attention to the press." I said, "Not really." And

he said, "Why?" And I said, "Well, because sometimes your opinion matters to me and sometimes it doesn't, but I've got a job, and I'm willing to lead." And the fellow said, "Well, how do you know what the people think?" And I said, "Well"—I reminded the fellow that people don't make up their mind based upon what they write, and secondly, my job is to lead. My job is to do what I think is the right thing and lead.

And I think those world leaders appreciate that, and I appreciate that when I see that they make those tough decisions. There is a common bond that's established when you're in the decisionmaking process and you're not trying to chase popular will, which is fickle and moves around. You stay focused on the objectives you set for a country. That's a very good question. It may be an area where we do establish in common.

And I've reminded them at times that, just do what you think is right, stand your ground in the face of public criticism, and the people—when things turn out the way—for the good, people will judge you correctly.

Dana, how are you?

Q. I'm well, thank you.

The President. Are you surviving this trip?

Q. I wish we just got a little more time in Bali.

The President. Yes, that and Hawaii. Look, I've heard all the people——

Q. She spent her honeymoon in Bali.

The President. You'll be thankful when we get back. You'll be grumpy—very grumpy, starting tomorrow, when we get airborne. But you'll be thankful when we all land home.

Reform of the Palestinian Authority

Q. Mr. President, I was wondering, the last time we sat around this table was coming from Aqaba.

The President. Middle East, that's right.

Q. And you were talking about how positive you felt about Prime Minister Abbas and the fact that you thought that things would be able to move forward.

The President. And they did move forward, for a while.

Q. I wonder if you could reflect on how you felt since—during the fact that the man you put confidence in and hope in is gone.

The President. I was disappointed that Arafat shoved him out of the way. I just—it was an unfortunate decision, because it stopped good progress toward a Palestinian state. And when the Palestinian Authority comes up with a leader who is willing to genuinely fight and dismantle terrorist organizations, the process will pick up where it left off and move forward.

Q. Are you confident of that?

The President. I hope it does. I think eventually it will. You've got to be patient in foreign policy sometimes.

Q. Is there anything more the United States can do on that, or is the roadmap—once they get on track on the roadmap, then things will come back and move forward again?

The President. The roadmap is still there. And we just need leadership willing to stand up and say, "We're going to prevent the few from letting the process move forward." And that's what they're doing. There are a few people there that don't want a Palestinian state. They've got different ambitions. And we've just got to fight them off.

Q. Do you think the public support of the U.S. for Abbas sort of got Arafat to dig in his heels?

The President. I don't know. I really don't. I can't speculate as to why the decision was made. This was an unfortunate decision, because it delayed the development of a Palestinian state.

Prime Minister Mahathir's Remarks at the Organization of the Islamic Conference Summit

Q. What did you tell Prime Minister Mahathir? Apparently he's saying you didn't fuss at him.

The President. No, I walked up and said, the—I said, "I want to inform you that you're going to read the newspapers"—Condi had briefed the press about me saying that the comments were reprehensible. I said, "You're going to see—I'm here to inform you that you're going to see that I thought your comments were reprehensible." I said, "They're divisive and unnecessary." I didn't

yell at him. I just told him—confirmed exactly what was in the newspaper.

Q. How did he respond?

Q. Yes, what did he say?

The President. “I was misquoted” or something. I can’t remember exactly what he said, but I just had—that was it. You know the way I felt.

Q. He said he was misquoted?

The President. Well, he said he was—

Q. Taken out of context?

The President. Yes, context, whatever he said to you all.

Press Secretary Scott McClellan. He said that in the paper.

The President. Not misquoted. It’s hard to misquote what he said.

Q. The issue were his comments. Obviously he’s on his way out, but the response, apparently, at the Islamic conference, was a round of applause. What do you make of that?

The President. It’s just unfortunate, again. I mean, it’s one of these situations where in order to achieve peace and freedom, you can’t pit groups against each other. And there’s a tendency to blame Jewish people. And that’s not the policy—that’s not how I think, and that’s not the policy of the United States Government. I wasn’t there, so I don’t—pitting groups against each other will never achieve a common objective. It does quite the opposite. He knew how I felt. There’s no question about that. I don’t know, what did he say?

Q. [Inaudible]—he was asking Muslims to have more understanding, at one part—

The President. Evidently, in his speech, he said that we need more education, a terrorist ban, which is good. That was positive.

Madrid Donors’ Conference

Q. I know you hate two questions, but I can just—just two quick ones. You talked about your meeting with Hu, and that was positive. Is there anything that he offered to you that he can—any pressure he can apply on North Korea? And the second one is a brief one. Are you happy with the progress or the contributions with the Madrid donors’ conference coming up?

The President. Donors’ conference? Yes. I think we’re making good progress. And the question on Hu was?

North Korea

Q. Is there anything that he can—any pressure that he can apply on North Korea? Did he say he would be able to do anything or—

The President. He is a—China is a major presence in the neighborhood. And the fact that they’re willing to take the same message to the North Koreans that the United States is taking to the North Koreans, along with three other nations, is a powerful statement to Kim Chong-il that it’s in his national interest that he abandon his nuclear weapons ambitions and that—he has been saying—as I said in the press conference, I think—one of your questions—he’s been saying, “I want a security guarantee.” And what we have now said is that in return for dismantling the programs, we’re all willing to sign some kind of document, not a treaty but a piece of paper that says we won’t attack you. We’ll see what happens.

Q. How does that—a lot of people were saying we can’t make it look like we’re giving in to blackmail from North Korea.

The President. What’s changed is we’ve now got five countries involved. And the neighborhood is now speaking. What happened before was the bilateral relations with the United States. And now he’s got his big neighbor to the—right on his border, he’s got a neighbor to the south, he’s got Japan, he’s got another neighbor, Russia, all saying the same thing. It’s a different dynamic, is what I’m—that’s where the policy has changed.

Q. This security guarantee, what should it say?

The President. That’s what we’ll determine. We haven’t worked out the words, but the point is, is that North Korea must hear that in return for the dismantling of their program—in a verifiable way, by the way; I mean, we’re going to want to know—that now five nations are willing to say something about his security.

Q. Everybody is behind that?

The President. Yes.

Iran

Q. Can I ask you one on Iran?

The President. On Iran? Yes.

Q. It seems like last night there was some maybe cautious optimism that this is a good first step. If they comply with the three criteria that you've laid out, would they be then allowed to have a civilian nuclear energy program, or would that—

The President. Well, it depends on—first things first, and that is, let us have, in a verifiable way, their agreement that was made with the IAEA. The IAEA must be allowed in, and we'll discuss it then. Our relations with Iran—that will help relations with Iran, obviously, if they do abandon a nuclear weapons program. It will also help if they—we end up doing a—reaching an agreement on the Al Qaida that they hold.

Q. What are the cross-strings there?

The President. You've got to have patience in foreign policy.

Q. Are you at all suspicious of the European motives?

The President. Am I suspicious? No, not in this case. No, I'm not. I believe, in this case, they generally are concerned about Iran developing a nuclear weapon. They understand the consequences. I appreciate it very much. We spent a lot of time talking to the European—our European counterparts, who are influential, more so than we are, in Iran. You know, we've got a sanctions policy with Iran; they don't. And there's influence. This is an effective approach. I've been saying all along that not every policy issue needs to be dealt with by force. There are ways to achieve common objectives, and this is a common objective.

And the European Union—and we're speaking directly to Silvio Berlusconi about it, who is the head of the EU. We've also obviously spoke to the three—the leaders of the countries who went into Iran. And they made a decision collectively in Europe that it's not in their interest or the world interest that Iran have a nuclear weapon. And we came to that conclusion, they've come to that conclusion, and working together is an effective way. It's the same approach—kind of approach we're taking in North Korea as well, a collective voice trying to convince a leader to change behavior.

Legislative Agenda

Q. [Inaudible]—Republicans in Congress didn't follow your wishes on the phone—

The President. I thought they did in the House. There's two bodies.

North Korea

Q. Do you regret saying that you loathe Kim Chong-il? Some people think that it helped them sort of—it made them sort of harden their position—

The President. Any leader who starves his—made him do what?

Q. It just made him—

The President. Made Kim Chong-il—surely it didn't make Kim Chong-il renege on the last agreement, did it? Because I wasn't there, you know what I'm saying?

Q. Right, but they've been much more vocal about their nuclear ambitions.

The President. No, they've been—remember, they lobbed a rocket over—

Q. Japan.

The President. Remember the rocket over Japan? Keep it in perspective. Anybody who starves his people is—I just can't respect anybody that would really let his people starve and shrink in size as a result of malnutrition. It's a sad, sad situation for the North Korean people. That's one people—I've assured the—our partners in this effort that we deeply care about the plight of the North Korean people. It's just unconscionable that that many people are starving in the 21st century. We provide—we're a generous nation. We provided food. We're not so sure the food is getting to the people, is one of the issues that we face. I feel strongly about failed leadership dashing the hopes of the people, in this case creating incredible starvation.

Q. Thank you.

The President. You're welcome.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 3:10 p.m. aboard Air Force One en route to Canberra, Australia. In his remarks, the President referred to President Hu Jintao of China; Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; President Roh Moo-hyun of South Korea; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; President Megawati Sukarnoputri of Indonesia; President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of the Philippines; Prime Minister John Howard of

Australia; former Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Lt. Gen. William G. Boykin, USA, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence; President Jose Maria Aznar of Spain; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamed of Malaysia; and Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy. A reporter referred to King Abdullah II of Jordan. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Statement on Senate Passage of Partial-Birth Abortion Legislation

October 22, 2003

I applaud the Senate for joining the House in passing the ban on partial-birth abortion. This is very important legislation that will end an abhorrent practice and continue to build a culture of life in America. I look forward to signing it into law.

Statement on the Death of Don Luis Ferre

October 22, 2003

Don Luis Ferre was a distinguished statesman and a great American, who dedicated himself to his family and the economic and cultural growth of Puerto Rico. As a member of Puerto Rico's House of Representatives, president of the senate, and Governor, he was an effective advocate for the political empowerment of the people of Puerto Rico. He was widely recognized as a strong leader in his community. In 1991, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his years of distinguished service to America. He was a good friend of my family, and I valued his advice and counsel.

Laura joins me in sending our condolences to the Ferre family and to the people of Puerto Rico.

Exchange With Reporters Following Discussions With Prime Minister John Howard of Australia in Canberra, Australia

October 23, 2003

President Bush. Can't get any better than that. [*Laughter*]

Australia-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Q. Mr. Bush, did you discuss the free trade agreement? And how are you committed to keeping agriculture in the free trade agreement if it goes ahead?

President Bush. What I'm committed to is seeing that we can get this free trade agreement done by the end of December. That's what John and I talked about in Crawford. I think a free trade agreement with Australia would be good for America, good for American workers. I also believe that it would be good for Australia.

Prime Minister Howard. Very good.

President Bush. And the commitment we talked about was to make sure our negotiators push forward with a deal. Obviously, agriculture is an important issue; intellectual property is an important issue. There's a lot of important issues that we've got to work through if—and I think we can.

Prime Minister Howard. Thank you. American?

President Bush. Yes, Tom.

War on Terror

Q. Mr. President, the Defense Secretary has written a memorandum saying there have been mixed results in the war on terror, that it's going to be a long, hard slog, and no bold steps have been taken yet. Do you agree with that characterization?

President Bush. What I agree with is that the war on terror is going to be tough work, and it's going to take a while. And we're making great progress. We're dismantling the Al Qaida network. They hide in hills, in caves, and you know, they hide in free societies. And it takes a while to find them, which is